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IRA'S BUM RAP

New Army Plan for Torturers' School

Year after year the US Army has seethed at the growing campaign aimed at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia. The annual protest rallies and civil disobedience outside Fort Benning have swelled in numbers, with 15,000 demonstrating last fall and 900 committing civil disobedience. Last year came a omen, as the House cut funding for the School, later restored by the Senate.

The Army is now preparing to launch a counter-attack designed to restore moral luster to an institution that has turned out 60,000 graduates, including many of the most vicious killers and torturers in the Latin American military. Bid farewell to the School of the Americas. If current legislation drafted by the Secretary of the Army matures on schedule, the butchers of tomorrow will learn their skills at the United States Military Institute for Hemispheric Security Cooperation. From SOA to USMIHSC. Same place, new name.

The game plan embodied in this legislation has two prime objectives: to dilute the protests against the School and to win enough votes in Congress to sustain funding for the institution in the coming year. On Capitol Hill the Army has been road-testing the legislative package with key legislators and is confident that it will sway enough congressional votes for the torturers' school to survive.

In its current draft form the legislation broadens the School's mission by authorizing the training of law enforcement and civilian personnel (a shift already in progress). Some of the specific cosmetic measures include:

- creation of a high-profile Board of Visitors. There already is such a body, but the idea is to get well-known public figures – i.e., congress people, religious leaders etc – to participate.
- more funding for adjunct civilian professors.
- creation of an annual curriculum review.
- provision at the School of "democratic enhancement training".
- development of a pr campaign to announce the new-look USMIHSC.

A Friend of CounterPunch familiar with the Army parleys on how to save the School says that if the current Board of Visitors is anything to go by, the instructors of torturers and death squad commanders have nothing to fear. The Board wants to increase SOA funding and spends its sessions pondering ways to discredit Roy Bourgois by charging him and his associates with being not just anti-SOA but un-American. On the Board is General Paul Gorman, formerly in charge of the US Army's Southern Command and an ardent admirer of the SOA in its unvarnished format. Gorman wrinkles his nose in disgust at the SOA's new-look courses designed to undercut the protest movement.

Such courses include "peace operations", democratic sustainment, humanitarian demining and a "human rights" requirement of eight hours. Psy-ops was nixed but resurfaced as "information gathering", and a sniper course was cancelled, though any of the students can go next door to Fort Benning and take the sniper course there.

Word filtering back to Pentagon from recent sessions of the Board of Visitors scarcely suggests any change of heart on the prime function of the School which is, as it has always been, the preparation of fresh cadres of military officers able and willing to carry out the proper custodial functions required of them by the American Empire.

The good news is that the protest campaign against the SOA is causing the Army enormous grief and internal hand-wringing. The bad news is that the nastier aspects of the School are probably being exported (via military training missions sent abroad), or taken over by other less high profile facilities elsewhere in the US. **CP**

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Our Little Secrets

The Iraq File

In a secret, closed door 30-minute meeting at the White House last December 15, with all aides summarily ejected from the room, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak informed President Clinton that he intended to begin talks with Iraq. He asked for, and received, Clinton's endorsement. A Friend of CounterPunch familiar with this secret undertaking explains that the Israelis have several reasons for parleying with the Iraqi leader. "Firstly, Barak understands that the road to Damascus lies through Baghdad" — meaning that even a hint of an Israeli rapprochement, however obscure, with Syria's Iraqi enemy would make Syrian leader Hafez al- Assad extremely nervous and possibly more amenable in peace negotiations. "Secondly, they both have a common interest in and fear of Iran, not to mention the third reason", he pauses to laugh, "business, business".

This is not the first example of the Israelis contacting Baghdad. Some years ago former Israeli leader Bibi Netanyahu was caught doing the same thing, those talks taking place in Morocco. On that occasion Martin Indyk, US Ambassador in Tel Aviv, was briefed by the Israelis but heeded their request not to pass on the news to Washington. Only when one of Indyk's numerous enemies discovered what was going on and hurried to report the ambassador's loyal silence did the State Department discover what had transpired.

Bill Clinton himself would never dare follow the imaginative example of his friend Barak and actually communicate with Iraq. Clinton believes in hewing to the traditional method of dealing with Iraq — starve its children and ensure that the Iraqi economy remains in a state of desperate privation. Thus, earlier this month, the US moved to prevent the Iraqis importing fifteen bulls from France. The stated excuse was that the animals, ordered with the blessing of the UN's humanitarian office in Baghdad to try and restock the Iraqi beef industry, would require certain vaccines which, who knows, might be diverted into a program to make biological weapons of mass destruction. For sheer bloody-mindedness however, the interdiction of the bulls pales beside the recent initiative of the British government, which has banned the export of vaccines for tetanus, diphtheria and yellow fever to Iraq on the grounds that they too might find their way into the hands of Saddam's biological weaponeers. It has been the self-exculpatory mantra of US and British officials that "food and medicine are exempt from sanctions". This, like so many other western policy pronouncements on Iraq, now turns out to be a lie.

In case CounterPunchers are under the impression that US and British policy toward Iraq has entered a new and more vicious phase, we feel it our duty to point out that the sanctions policy has always been marked by acts of captious cruelty. A brief review of some shining examples (courtesy of the Mariam Appeal in London): December 12, 1991, paper for hospital doctors vetoed. September, 1991. US vetoes a request by Bulgaria to ship baby-food to Iraq on the grounds that it might be consumed by adults. February 6, 1992, table tennis balls from Vietnam are vetoed by the US, UK, France and Japan. March, 1992, the Sanctions Committee blocks a Dutch request to supply children's hospitals with NCR computers, which can only be used in specific hematology and hepatitis studies. April 26, 1992, water purification chemicals vetoed by US and UK. June, 1992, the US representative of the Committee blocks a Danish request to ship heaters to children's hospitals on the grounds that they might be used elsewhere. June, 1992, the UK vetoes an application by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation to supply 300 tons of insecticide to Iraq on the grounds that they might be used for other purposes. June 1, 1992, application from Spanish consortium to help rebuild medical syringe factory (bombed in war) vetoed by UK and France. August 4, 1992. Children's bicycles vetoed by US and UK. October 29, 1992, boxes of nail polish and lipsticks vetoed by UK.

April 3, 1993, tennis balls, children's clothes, adult clothes, pencil sharpeners, erasers and school notebooks from Pakistan vetoed by US, UK, France and Japan. July 24, 1993, cotton for medical use (swabs, gauze, etc.) vetoed by UK. August 14, 1993, application from Japan to supply communication links for hospital links (i.e. pagers, hospital-ambulance links) vetoed by US and UK. September 17, 1993, shroud material vetoed by US and UK; later released from the UK; then export license revoked under new UK regulations; whole process of applications had to begin again.

Lessons from Serbia

Some time ago we predicted that the final "Lessons Learned" report on the Serbian air war being prepared under the auspices of Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre would be "lying, cheating, thieving" (though Hamre is a former divinity student). We now have it on excellent authority that Hamre and his staff have been too idle or unimaginative even to make up their own lies. Instead, they have simply taken Wesley Clark's demented fantasies, as presented in his briefing to the hacks at Nato HQ last September 16, as the basis of their findings and indeed will be including a transcript of the briefing as an appendix to the report.

The air force is meanwhile embarked on its own definitive upsum of the Yugoslav conflict. Friends of CounterPunch assure us that there need be no fear of this study committing any undue truths. Coordinating the effort is an obscure office

Editors
Alexander Cockburn
Jeffrey St. Clair

Co-writer
Andrew Cockburn

Design
Deborah Thomas

Counselor
Ben Sonnenberg

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known as the "Air Force Studies and Analysis Agency," created decades ago as a counterforce against the hated "whizz kids" fostered by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara but long since degenerated into a speechwriting office for the senior ranks. The agency in turn has found itself unequal to the task of burnishing the air force's sorry Kosovo record and has sub-contracted the job to the private sector. The contractors are SAIC, long infamous as a bondslave of the national security complex, and the Abtech corporation. The choice of the latter to expound on the vital lessons to be learned from Nato's first war is telling, since it is a marketing organisation, enthusiastically urging customers to "learn how to increase your direct marketing profits fast and inexpensively". Among its past successes Abtech-Marketminer cites the Strategic Defense Initiative (Reagan's star wars — $50 billion with nothing to show for it) and the F-22 Advanced Tactical Fighter, (most costly boondoggle of the current era). With such a proud record of myth-peddling, no wonder the company's services have been called on to memorialize the Kosovo conflict.

DON'T BLAME THE IRA FOR THE ULSTER VETO

Not the least dismaying aspect of the most recent crisis in Northern Ireland has the stampeding of public opinion here in the United States into denunciation of the IRA, and into sympathy to the political maneuvers of the British government and of the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble. Naturally enough, this sudden tilt is being viewed with profound satisfaction by the British, not to mention the Ulster Unionists, who have chafed for years at the admirable refusal of the Clinton administration to take dictation from the British Embassy in Washington.

Tens of thousands of high-flown words have now been devoted to the IRA's supposed flouting of the 1998 Good Friday agreement, the IRA's lack of good faith, Sinn Fein's duplicity. Yet as Britain's Secretary for Northern Ireland, Peter Mandelson, finally admitted on February 11 as he returned the province to direct rule, suspending its ten-week old coalition government, the IRA is not in breach of that agreement, which stated that decommissioning of IRA weapons should occur "in the context of the implementation of the overall settlement". This was what the IRA said once more on February 11 and its leaders may be forgiven for feeling somewhat baffled when they got some grudging praise the next day for merely reiterating what they agreed to nearly two years ago. As a practical matter the IRA could have only have agreed to disarmament if such a process was mutual, part of the above-mentioned "overall settlement". Though in fact there has been distinct lack of such mutuality, the IRA has indeed honored its commitment to peace, ensuring the longest period of tranquillity – now in its third year — in the recent history of Northern Ireland.

Fifty percent of a new Ulster police force could include decommissioned IRA volunteers. That would be reconciliation.

Despite this tranquillity the capacity for organized violence remains overwhelmingly with the Unionists and with the British. Just visit south Armagh where IRA units are being asked to turn in their weapons. British forts dot the hillsides. British patrols still deploy. British helicopters fill the sky. The Royal Ulster Constabulary is still a standing, unreformed force with an awful history still vivid in Catholic minds. There has been abundant testimony that RUC officers were implicated in assassinations and bombings of Catholics, in conspiracies with other Protestant terror groups. Last week Ulster Unionists were insisting that the RUC never be disbanded and its name survive.

On one well-informed count last year there were about 135,000 legal guns in the north, 90 per cent of them in the hands of RUC and the British army. What army with the function of guaranteeing the safety of Catholic communities in the North – which is what the IRA deems itself to be – could blithely lay down its arms amid these conditions? More precisely, what IRA commander could order such a course without facing the likelihood of mutinous dissent? In the view of many Republicans, only a beaten army unilaterally lays down its guns and only an antagonist acting in bad faith would try to force the decommissioning issue at this time.

There is no reason to believe that when Trimble accepted his slice of the Nobel peace prize he traded in his instincts and outlook as a Unionist, leader of a party adamantly opposed to power-sharing or anything other than absolute Protestant dominance. The truth is that Trimble was dragged to the negotiating table and forced him to accept the coalition cabinet with its two Sinn Fein members. After as short a time as ten peaceful weeks Trimble found this situation intolerable. His sudden confection of a previously non-existent decom-missioning "deadline" overstepped by the IRA was a maneuver to destroy the coalition and in this tactic he was backed by Mandelson and Blair, who lost all room for maneuver by making it known that they were entirely in Trimble's corner. Worse still, Mandelson chose to suspend the new coalition government in northern Ireland and restore direct rule, even though he was well aware that General John de Chastelain, the former Canadian officer heading the international disarmament body, was about to report that he was confident of the IRA's good faith.

There are some signs that the British realised they had overreacted on Trimble's behalf. Some vague noises were duly made about the possible withdrawal of some British forces. When the British did finally suspend the new power-sharing institutions on February 11 they began to downplay the significance of the whole affair, insisting that suspension was not necessarily an epochal event.But by that time, not without reason, they had prompted the IRA to distance itself from a process in which its leaders thought they were being unfairly stigmatized.

If the British government wanted to settle the decommissioning issue once and for all, it would propose that the RUC be abolished in favor of a recomposed police force which would be evenly divided between Catholics and Protestants. 50 per cent of such a force could include decommissioned IRA volunteers. That's actual reconciliation, beyond the level of high-flown speeches at Nobel prize-givings. The announcement of such a force would then be the green light for the IRA to decommission on a grand scale. Exactly this process happened in several decolonizations – India, Kenya, Zimbabwe — pushed through by Britain. Today,

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(OLS, *continued from p. 3)*
members of the ANC's armed wing have been recruited into the South African army in large numbers.

One can understand the British dilemma. Blair and Mandelson no doubt feel that if Trimble goes, there'll be no Unionist they can deal with. So once again Trimble holds the old, ever-familiar Ulster veto. There's no reason why the United States should be suckered into playing along with this veto too

The Red and the Brown

In the 1980s it was fashionable for everyone from Rep George Miller of California to the disciples of Von Mises at the Cato Institute point to environmental degradation in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as a testament to the failures of communism. And certainly the USSR had its problems, from turning the Caspian Sea into an oily waste to Chernobyl. But by any reasonable standard the situation has vastly deteriorated since the collapse of the USSR and the invasion of western capitalists looking to make a quick billion or two.

One chilling recent example is the cynanide spill in northern Romania at the Aural gold mine operated by Esmerelda Gold, an Australian company. Constructed with little regulatory oversight, the mine's tailing pond dam breached, spilling millions of gallons of cyanide-loaded water into the Tisza River. The flow of poison soon reached the Danube, Europe's largest waterway. In Russia, the air is more polluted than it was in the mid-1980s, by a considerable degree. On February 14, Itar-Tass reported that the air quality in more than 185 Russian cities is far beyond "acceptable limits," meaning it shows high concentrations of particulate matter, ozone, noxious gasses and heavy metals. The most polluted cities in Russia are Moscow, Arkhangelsk in the northwest, Ekaterinburg in the Urals. According to Viktor Danilov-Danilian, head of the Russian ecology committee, more than 120 Russian cities show pollution levels at five times the level considered safe. Altogther, Danilov-Danilian says, more a third of Russia's population now live in areas where the air is toxic. He pins the blame on the absence of pollution control equipment on oil and chemical plants built within the last 10 years, often by western investors. CP

Blows Against the Death Penalty

Ryan's Quake

In a gubernatorial order that is one of the best pieces of news for foes of the death penalty in twenty years, and of tremendous national significance Governor George Ryan of Illinois announced on January 31 that he is suspending imposition of the death penalty in his state forthwith on the grounds that he "cannot support a system which has proven so fraught with error". Since 1977 Illinois has executed 12 and freed 13 from Death Row on the grounds that their innocence had been conclusively established. Nationwide, the number of such people spared the execution chamber (sometimes by as slim a margin as a day or two) on grounds of proven innocence is 85.

Philadelphia is the largest of the eight municipalities in the US to call for a moratorium on executions.

On February 10, shortly after Ryan's announcement, the Philadelphia City Council voted 12-4 for a resolution calling for a moratorium on executions in Pennsylvania until a study can be organized to determine if the death penalty is being applied fairly.

The city of Philadelphia is the largest of the eight municipalities in the United States to urge such a halt to executions. Charlottesville, VA, adopted a similar resolution last month. Other municipalities urging a moratorium include New Haven, CT; Mt. Rainer, MD; and Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Durham and Orange County, all in North Carolina.

The Council's action comes as the Pennsylvania Legislature is holding hearings in the Senate Judiciary Committee on a moratorium bill on February 22. Moratorium legislation is also under consideration in Oklahoma, Washington, New Jersey, Maryland, and Alabama.

Philadelphia County has sentenced 125 of the 226 people now on death row in Pennsylvania, with almost 90 per cent of them being black or hispanic. Philadelphia County ranks third in number of prisoners it has sent to death row (123) behind Los Angeles County, CA (156) and Harris County, TX (140), which includes Houston. The city has more people on death row than 37 states.

Pennsylvania has the fourth largest death row in the nation, behind California, Texas, and Florida with more than two thirds of the state's death row inmates black or hispanic. The council vote came on the eve of hearings held by the Judiciary Committee of Pennsylvania's Senate on Senate Bill 952, which calls for a 2-year moratorium on executions in Pennsylvania. The witnesses for these hearings are being coordinated by former Pennsylvania Attorney General Ernie Preate. Once a leading and nationally recognized advocate of the death penalty, and author of a book on how to convict in capital cases, Preate successfully argued for death penalty law before the US Supreme Court, and won. Now he leads the movement in the opposite direction, calling for an immediate moratorium on the death penalty he helped create.

Evidence proving that the application of the death penalty is racially skewed in Pennsylvania, most conspicuously in Philadelphia, will also be introduced during the hearings. An executive study by one of the country's foremost researchers on race and capital punishment, Law Professor David Baldus and colleagues, has constructed an analysis of race in death penalty convictions in Philadelphia. This study reveals that the odds of receiving a death sentence in Philadelphia are four times higher if the defendant is black or hispanic. More than 50 per cent of the death sentences handed down in Pennsylvania are from

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Philadelphia, which comprises only 14 per cent of Pennsylvania's population. Of the 226 death row inmates in Pennsylvania, 126 are from Philadelphia and 82 per cent are black or hispanic. More than 90 per cent of Pennsylvania's death row prisoners were too poor to afford a lawyer for their initial trial, and were left with whatever representation the state selected for them. After sending an individual to death row, Pennsylvania provides no funds for post-conviction legal defense, and instead, has appropriated $500,000 to the Attorney General's office to establish an execution resource center to oppose capital appeals. Governor Ridge signed 132 death warrants in his first term in office. Since beginning his second term in 1999, he has signed 61 more death warrants.

So far as George W. Bush's home state is concerned, it'll be a busy time in the Huntsville Death House. February 23 sees Cornelius Goss strapped down for his last shot, followed the very next day by 64-year old Betty Beets. March will bid adieu to Odell Barnes, Timothy Gribble and Dennis Bagwell, and Super April will be crueller yet, with lethal injections for Orien Joiner, Victor Saldona, Robert Carter, Robert Neville and Ricky McGinn. Carruthers Alexander goes to his maker on May 3. Such at least is the present execution calendar. Six whites, four blacks and one Hispanic. Check it out on www.gwbush.com, carefully described on Yahoo as a "parody" site, but as useful a place as any to locate Gov. Bush's leadership skills and decision-making powers.

Bush has two vulnerabilities he can't disguise, since they are his only known attributes—beyond the truckloads of money he'd raised—in the minds of about 95 per cent of the American people. He's the son of George H.W. Bush and he's chief executive officer of the Texas death industry. We already know the fatal political consequences when voters are reminded of his parentage. It took but one brief outing by his parents to New Hampshire, one characteristically jaunty throw-away line by the former president about "this boy, this son of ours", probably to double the margin of George W's terrible defeat. The man would do better if he claimed he'd been turned out on a mountainside in infancy and suckled by wolves.

But can it be counted as a deficit to have signed more death warrants than any other elected official alive today in America? Don't polls show that a robust majority of Americans favor the death penalty? There are compelling signs that popular opinion is changing. Take a Public Policy Institute poll of Californians, released on January 2. In recent years, asked whether they favor the death penalty, Californians have been giving a robust vote in favor of death by 3 to 1. The Public Policy Institute poll asked a different question. If the choice was between death and life imprisonment without possibility of parole, what would the respondent choose. This choice produced nearly a dead heat: 49 pro death and 47 for life imprisonment. Hispanics opted 57 per cent against the death penalty, and Democrats opposed it 65 per cent to 38 per cent, which suggests that Democratic candidates may soon feel as free as the governor of Illinois to raise doubts.

In Florida another member of the notorious Bush Gang, Gov. Jeb Bush says he won't follow Ryan's lead. In Florida 20 inmates have walked off death row—in three cases within 16 hours of execution—after evidence emerged that they were wrongly convicted. No state has released more condemned prisoners from Death Row. Bush claims that "Here in Florida, there is no competent evidence that suggests an innocent person has been wrongly executed".

Florida's former chief justice, Gerald Kogan, demurs, insisting that the state has executed people who were not guilty. "Knowing as I do the imperfections in our system, I know that we have, on occasions in the past, executed those people who were in fact innocent". Jeb Bush has said he favors speedier appeals, not more delays, for Florida's 365 condemned prisoners. They have spent an average of 14 years each on death row. Last month, just like his kiiller brother in Texas, Jeb Bush helped push through a new law limiting appeals and shortening the time for filing them. The law is being challenged in the courts.

A 1991 study found that a person who kills a white victim is 3.4 times more likely to be sentenced to death in Florida than someone who kills an African-American person. In Florida last year, trial errors caused the Florida Supreme Court to overturn nearly three of every four death sentences. Several of the Illinois death row inmates were freed after DNA evidence eliminated them as suspects. In Florida, none of the 20 was released because of DNA but rather because of flaws in the system.

Footnote: Pennsylvania's best known Death Row inmate is of course Mumia Abu Jamal. A month ago here we noted, and deplored RadioNation's Marc Cooper for his call for "make 2000 a year free of Mumia". The only way for Cooper's wish to come true would be for Mumia to be executed, and Cooper drew just reproof for his vulgarities. Now this, from Mike Farrell, of Death Penalty Focus of California though more famous as B.J. Hunnicutt in M*A*S*H. "I'm disturbed at the angry response Marc Cooper's column/article has generated. The piece, clearly too pugnaciously worded for some, was a political column intending to provoke thought and reaction. Unfortunately, I see more reacting than thinking."

Ahoy there, Mike Farrell! When someone is sitting on Death Row in Pennyslvania, someone whose case has done more to rally anti-death penalty sentiment, particularly among the young, than any other, you don't publish self-indulgent ravings about "some flaky cult member like Mumia Abu Jamal" (Cooper's words). You don't call for 2000 to be "free of him". If you have pretensions (increasingly frail in Cooper's case) to being a radical journalist, you act and write in a responsible fashion. **CP**

"We have in the past executed people who were in fact innocent"—former Florida chief justice Gerald Kogan

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Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell's Billion Dollar Water Grab

A River Runs Through Him

As any fan of the movie Chinatown knows, in the American West one commodity reigns supreme. Not oil or timber, not gold or silicon chips, but water which flows its glistening way through the body politic, providing nourishment for corruption.

The latest politician caught in a crooked water grab is Colorado's Ben Nighthorse Campbell, the Harley-riding former Democrat who jumped to the Republicans after the 1994 elections. The move didn't surprise observers who had followed Campbell's career. He had modeled himself after Wayne Aspinall, an anti-environmental congressman from western Colorado who orchestrated the spasm of dam-building, mining and logging in the West in the late 1950s and 1960s. Campbell shared Aspinall's loathing of nature, but he's never exhibited Aspinall's grandiose malignity. Campbell's politics have rarely risen above the petty and the personal.

In the summer of 1998, Campbell concocted a bill to transfer the federally-owned Vallecitos reservoir and dam, located in southern Colorado near Durango, to the privately-owned Pine River Irrigation District. Originally, the legislation would have sold the federal property to the ranching and development group for only $492,000, far below its market value. But by the time the bill had moved out of Campbell's committee, even that small sum had been excised and both the reservoir and the dam were offered on behalf of we-the-people to the Pine River organization for free. In a speech on the Senate floor, Campbell said the transfer was needed in order to give citizens "local control" over their water supplies. The bill flew through the Senate unanimously on a voice vote on October 8, 1998, but stalled when the Congress adjourned before the House could take up the bill.

All of this is standard fare, excepting one factor: Campbell concealed from his colleagues the fact that he is to be a beneficiary of the scheme. He is a major shareholder in the Pine River Irrigation District. The Irrigation District is really a collection of downstream ranchers and developers, of whom Campbell is the primus inter pares, aka top dog.

Campbell is one of the Pine River group's largest landholders. His Nighthorse Ranch covers 267 acres of the Irrigation District.. Ninety percent of the landowners in the irrigation district own less than 100 acres. On his financial disclosure forms Campbell also modestly chose not to disclose these value of these holdings and the water rights.

In theory, the US Senate has rules against this kind of brazen self-dealing. Senate Ethics Rule 37.4 prohibits a senator from introducing legislation "the principal purpose of which is to further his own pecuniary interest" or that of a "limited class" of which the senator or his family is a member.

If the water going to Campbell was sold on the open market it might fetch as much as a million dollars.

But the senate ethics committee didn't see it that way and ended up giving Campbell a mild tap on the wrist for his malfeasance. Campbell sustained the tap bravely, telling a town meeting in Colorado, "These charges were bullshit". Nor had the committee taken up the matter on its own initiative. It was forced to deal with it after a small but feisty Colorado environmental group, the Citizens' Progressive Alliance, filed a complaint alleging numerous violations of senate rules. Thus challenged, the senate ethics committee sat on the complaint for months, then in November 1999 sent the Citizen's Group a letter dismissing the complaint. The committee used subtle reasoning to conclude that Campbell hadn't "technically" violated senate rules. In effect, the committee decided that the Irrigation District, of which Campbell is a leading owner, didn't represent "a limited class".

In the view of Phillip Doe, a Littleton, Colorado environmentalist who filed the complaint for the Alliance "their letter was gibberish. In fact, it's insulting. And it shows just how much of a club the senate is and how much each member can get away with."

On the Hill, Campbell is widely regarded as a bully, a senate version of Rep. Dick Armey. But in the upper chamber Campbell doesn't have Armey's clout, where he is trusted by neither Republicans nor Democrats. "Campbell is stupid, uninterested and mean," a staffer for a Repbulican senator tells CounterPunch. "His staff spends most of its time cleaning up the messes he makes." Campbell, who has little influence on the Hill, prefers to throw his weight around back in Colorado, targeting reporters, environmentalists and federal employees. In 1996, managers at the Ignacio, Colorado offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs lodged complaints with their superiors about Campbell's intimidation of BIA resource managers, as part of an effort to get the BIA to divert more of its limited water supplies to his ranch. Dan Breuninger, the head of the BIA's Southern Ute Agency, told the Durango Herald in an October 1998 story, that the senator "threatened [BIA employees] with the loss of their jobs."

Brueninger's predecessor, Tony Recker, had also heard complaints about Campbell's strong-armed tactics. "I've heard that the BIA area director has been talked to in a number of ways [by Campbell]," Recker said. When asked if he had been harassed by the senator, Recker clammed up. "I would rather not answer that question."

Such oafish behavior apparently runs in the family. The Campbells' neighbor, Jim Nall, saaid he was threatened with a beating by Campbell's son. Nall sought and received a restraining order against Campbell Jr. Campbell Sr. doesn't like the press much either. On a recent visit to Durango, the gallant senator meet with the county council to discuss the Animas-La

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Plata scheme and other legislative matters. Although Colorado sunshine laws require all government meetings to be open to the public, Campbell threw a fit when he espied a reporter from the Durango Herald planning to do his lawful job, covering the session. He demanded that the reporter be removed from the room and the meeting held behind closed doors. Later Campbell said he didn't have anything against that particular reporter, but that he thought the publisher of the paper was "a scumbag".

During his floor speech, Campbell said the Pine River Irrigation District deal fit nicely with Al Gore's reinventing government scheme and that it was motivated by a desire "to save precious taxpayer dollars". The water rights alone are worth an estimated $2 billion. But that's not all the Irrigation District gets. More than 500 acres of now public land surrounding the reservoir and the dam would be part of the deal. These lands are valued at more than $100 million, and this doesn't count lucrative oil and mineral rights to these land which would also be transferred to the district. Plus, the Irrigation District would be given the right to charge license fees for boats and other recreational activities on the lake, which might put millions more into the District's accounts.

Campbell isn't out of the legal woods yet. In early February, Doe and his group sent a letter to the Department of Justice's Office of Public Integrity, asking the federal prosecutors to lodge criminal charges against the senator. In reviewing the master contract between the Irrigation District and the US government, Doe discovered a provision that Campbell and the senate ethics committee have ignored. The provision expressly forbids any member of congress from benefiting from the contract.

Over the past 13 years, Campbell has received subsidized federal water from Vallecitos, subsidies that may be illegal under the terms of the contract. The Bureau of Reclamation estimates that the value of the subsidies is $277,000. But if the water going to Campbell was sold on the open market it would probably fetch more than one million dollars.

Campbell's benefits go beyond the water subsidies. He has lobbied the Department of Agriculture to provide low-interest loans and construction grants to the Irrigation District totaling $17 million.

Al Gore praised an oil sale which will mean millions to an oil company his family has strong ties to.

And he has bragged about his role in bringing home such bacon to his fellow shareholders. In a March 6, 1988 letter, Campbell boasted that he had approached Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman about securing more money for the Pine River Irrigation District and added that "my position on the Committee on Appropriation allows me to work directly on the funding issue".

But there is another aspect to this affair, which expands the level of intrigue and corruption much further, encompassing such environmental kingpins as Al Gore and Bruce Babbitt. Under the auspices of Gore's National Performance Review (NPR), also known as the "reinventing government" initiative, the sell-off of federal assets has accelerated swiftly in the last six years,. Although cast as a way to downsize government, in practice the Performance Review has put up for sale valuable federal properties at garage sale prices. Often these assets end up in the hands of political cronies of the administration.

Take one of the great rip-offs of the 1990s: the sale of the Elk Hills petroleum reserve to Occidental Petroleum, a company which deep ties to the Gore family. Elk Hills, located near Bakersfield, is one of the top ten oil reserves in the US outside of Alaska, containing over one billion barrels of oil. Gore praised the disposal of the site, which also provides crucial wildlife habitat. "With the sale of Elk Hills we are getting the government out of the oil business", said Gore piously proclaimed, in a somewhat crude rendition of the functions of government: "We're returning to the private sector those functions that can be more effectively performed in the private sector."

In a similar vein, Bruce Babbitt has helped engineer a huge federal/private land swap in involving his family's ranch in northern Arizona that will aid a sprawling theme-park development called Grand Canyon Forest Village, located near the entrance to Grand Canyon Park. The Disneyland-style scheme is being built by Tommy DePaolo, one of Babbitt's former clients.

Although the Clinton crowd scarcely holds Ben Nighthorse Campbell in high esteem, especially after he jumped ship to the Republicans after the 1994 elections, they may need Campbell's support for another grandiose project: the Aminas-LaPlata water project, a multi-billion dollar scam now being hyped as a plan to give more water to the Southern Ute tribes. In fact it's designed to speed development of the booming area around Durango, Colorado. Babbitt once opposed the water project. Now he supports it as part of his legacy to the West (and a pay-off to his political patrons) and he needs Campbell's help in pushing the project through. "We've been flimflammed", Ray Frost, a leader of the Southern Ute Tribe, laments. "Where will we ever come up with the $185 million to bring the water from the reservoir to the reservation? That water is meant for Durango."

Campbell, by the way, serves on both the appropriations committee and the energy and natural resources committee, which has jurisdiction over all western water projects. **CP**

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Their Man in North Korea

Nike's Joe Appleseed

For the last 20 years Nike's strategy has been: 1. find the most repressive regime around. 2. put shoe and apparel factories there. The sneaker-maker started in Taiwan and moved to South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, China and Vietnam. Phil Knight's thinking was that tyrannies would offer low labor prices and keep a lid on political dissent and worker organizing. As countries begin to democratize, Nike tends to move out.

The chief strategist behind this game plan for Nike is Dr. Joseph Ha, vice-president for Asian affairs and a special assistant to Knight. Ha is the former dean of the international studies department at Lewis and Clark College. Ha, a somewhat secretive figure, is reportedly on friendly terms with the Korean intelligence community. Last year his name cropped up in papers across Southeast Asia when a letter he had written to the government of Vietnam ended up being printed in a Vietnamese paper. Ha's January 11, 1999 letter warned the leaders of the regime that anti-Nike human rights and labor organizers were bent on overturning the Vietnamese government. "The ultimate goal is political rather than economic", Ha wrote. "They target Nike because Nike is a high-profile company and a major creator of jobs in Vietnam. Nevertheless, this is the first step for their political goal, which is to create a so-called democratic society on the U.S. model."

Ha then fingered Thuyen Nguyen, a Vietnamese-American who now runs Vietnam/LaborWatch. "A few human rights groups, as well as a Vietnamese refugee who is engaged in human rights activities, are not friends of Vietnam", Ha charged. At the time, Nguyen was in Vietnam interviewing Nike factory workers. "It's a dangerous statement to make", Nguyen says. "To accuse activists of trying to overthrow the government ... There are people in Vietnam who might believe Nike and act on it". Ultimately, Nike distanced itself from Ha's letter. But he wasn't fired or reprimanded. And Nike's tactics haven't changed.

Kim Jong Il rolls out the red carpet for Nike's man in Asia.

Now Ha has resurfaced again, this time in a bizarre scheme involving the government of North Korea and Mercy Corps International, a Portland-based charity supported by Nike. Last summer Ha visited North Korea, meeting with political leaders. North Korea and the United States have not maintained diplomatic relations since the end of the Korean war. Moreover, the United States retains an embargo against the nation, barring all trade except for humanitarian aid. The exact purpose of Ha's visit is unclear, but he came back to Oregon with a plan to develop orchards in North Korea in the name of famine relief. Ha arranged for the Viewmont Orchards in Hood River, Oregon, to send an initial shipment of 10,000 apple trees to North Korea. Then Ha invited North Korea's UN ambassador, Li Hyong Choi, to Oregon on January 21 to tour the orchards. "Of course we have to give food, because people starve", Ha said. "But the apple project is long-range. It's also renewable."

"This may be a sign that Nike is looking to do business in North Korea," says Jeff Ballinger, director of Press for Change. "It certainly is their kind of political climate." The North Koreans seem grateful for Ha and Nike's attentions and, in return, promise that there will be no liberalization on their end. "Our friends maybe were wondering whether Korea could survive with our present system, and our enemies were hoping Korea would collapse," Li said during an interview in Portland. "Now in a short period of time Korea will be turned into a powerful nation; this is the main determination of our great leader Kim Jong Il." **CP**

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